

# Dobson publishes book about the Great Plains

Faculty



Adjunct professor of history Patrick Dobson's book, *Seldom Seen: A Journey into the Great Plains*, was recently published.

**Patrick Dobson,** adjunct professor of history, is a bear of a man. His presence, enthusiasm and stories fill a room. He is a freelance writer, a member of Ironworkers Local #10 in Kansas City and has completed all-but-a-dissertation toward a doctorate in 20th century U.S. environmental history and American literature from the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Today Dobson is being interviewed about his first book, *Seldom Seen: A Journey into the Great Plains*, published by the University of Nebraska Press, released September 2009. The book describes Dobson's two-and-a-half month journey from Kansas City, Mo., to Helena, Mont., in 1995, a journey Dobson says was "meant to quiet his restless soul." With only a backpack, Dobson, then a single father, left his job with the engineering maintenance department at the Ritz-Carlton to chronicle the lives of ordinary people in the Great Plains.

He kept a notebook and filed biweekly columns in *The Pitch* during his trip. The journal is the basis for his book, for which he is doing a round of media interviews and book signings as of this writing. A second book based on his river journey home is in the works.

At JCCC, Dobson teaches U.S. history and Western Civilization. He has bachelor's degrees in American history and English from UMKC and a master's degree in American history from the University of Wyoming. Part skilled laborer,

part scholar, Dobson's employment reflects his dichotomy: maintenance at the Ritz, four years as a full-time writer at *The Pitch*, three years as an editor at Andrews McMeel Universal, and one and one-half years of self-employment – hauling dirt, rehabbing houses and stacking rock – previous to entering the UMKC doctoral program in 2004. He joined the Ironworkers after completing his doctoral classes. The one constant in his life has been writing.

Dobson has now worked out an ideal plan for his PhD life – working as a journeyman iron worker during the summers and teaching during the school year. He believes he is a misfit traversing different universes comfortably.

"When I'm with the academics, I feel like the dirty fingernailer at the queen's banquet," Dobson said. "When I'm with journalists, they know something is not quite right about me, something doesn't fit. Then when I'm with the ironworkers they know there is something about me – things I talk about – so they know I've been someplace else."

Fifteen years after his trek across the plains, Dobson appears to have put his soul to rest. He has learned he needs to be outside doing physical labor, he needs to teach because he views learning as an unfinished business and he needs to write.

Dobson's book is available at Amazon, University of Nebraska Press and the JCCC Billington Library. 